

We had a very full agenda at our last Board meeting and there are some exciting changes that will be taking place that will provide our students and their teachers with tools that will help our children to learn and grow.

At our last Education committee we received the results of the work in two important pilots: middle school math and a core reading program.

As part of our continuous curriculum evaluation, different programs are being reviewed during different years. Math and Reading was reviewed over the past year. The evaluation process consists of piloted programs that have been selected to be evaluated from various vendors. Committees of staff from the respective disciplines meet to identify what is needed, what we currently do, and where we need to improve. Next the group winnows down the choices that will be moved into the pilot evaluation phase. The middle school math evaluation involved two programs. The teams meet and review feedback gathered from various stakeholders. Additional evaluation of alignment with State standards and fit with other programs currently offered in the District at other grade levels is completed. Quantitative evaluations are completed using standardized tests in order to benchmark and measure the initial impact of the pilots which is then analyzed. Then, the results, and recommendations for adoption are presented to and reviewed by the Education Committee.

The Education committee was very satisfied with the scope, depth and the rigor of the evaluation comparing the two different programs. The early quantitative results showed marked improvements in both programs, validating the need for a new core math program in the middle schools. Other data initial data showed the differences in student performance between the two programs leading to an overwhelming recommendation to adopt Math Connects. While the data is preliminary, and results may vary child to child, we feel that this adoption of this program will help the children achieve better results in math, meet the needs of all of our learners, as well as improve our NECAP scores. The Education committee unanimously endorsed the adoption of this program for next year. Some highlights: excellent alignment with State standards, good fit with the new math at the elementary and high school level. The program also offers a deep and extensive catalogue of offerings allowing the teachers flexibility to meet the needs of students over a wide range of proficiency levels. More details will follow from your child's teacher.

Another exciting new program will put our readers in a position to be more successful not only in reading, but in all subjects. This program will also support the great work that has already gone on regarding how we support and develop our core reading curriculum. Our literacy coaches along with our dedicated teachers have worked very hard to improve how we teach reading and how our children learn how to read. The decision to evaluate reading was based on two important facts: one, our readers are not meeting the grade level expectations of No Child Left Behind, NCLB and second, we are not complying with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, or IDEA, that states that schools must use instructional programs and practices that have been proven by scientifically based research. As with the math curriculum, various programs were

reviewed and evaluated and a few were brought forward to enter the yearlong pilot evaluation phase.

The Education committee was given a presentation on the two final programs. A very important fact that was discussed was that when evaluating the performance of our students, using our existing program and reading strategies showed that none of our students were meeting the current benchmark for proficiency. While all of our teachers and students have worked hard and made significant progress, our existing program is not meeting the standards that have been set.

The new program, called Reading Street, will provide a consistent strategy for teaching reading and a more consistent approach for learning for our students. Another highlight is the various levels that this program has so that in any given classroom, the range of proficiency can be addressed in a more complete way than how we do it today. Specific examples from pilot teachers demonstrated that now it will be less likely to have to pull-out some students during reading as often as we do today. The Education committee again unanimously supported the adoption of this program.

While both of these programs have a financial impact on the budget, we are confident that the right decisions will be made to shift resources and priorities in order to make the needed progress in these two important curriculum areas.

There has been a request from the Board to the Budget and Property committee to undertake a very important evaluation. We have requested that a detailed, comprehensive review of how we use our resources. Specifically how we utilize our resources, specifically our buildings. We are going to evaluate how we use our physical space, to determine if we are maximizing our resources in an efficient, effective and physically responsible way. This is NOT a work stream to evaluate closing our schools, but it will include review of adding grades, shifting grades, closing schools, as well as doing nothing at all. This maybe one of the most important projects we have done in a long time. I would like to hear your thoughts, fears, concerns, and suggestions.

A brief update regarding the teacher's contract. A meeting was held late last month. The purpose was to have a fact finder review the facts of the negotiations and to provide us with a recommendation. I am hopeful that the fact finders report will provide us with a reasonable solution to our current situation and we can provide you a recommendation and provide the teachers a contract that is fair, competitive, and fiscally responsible.

Feel free to send me E-mail, at [sbrock@conval.edu](mailto:sbrock@conval.edu), or call me at 547-6221 or send you comments directly to my home at 700 Bible Hill Rd